

# POWER 12 FOODS: NEVER GO HUNGRY

You have heard the saying for years: Abs are made in the kitchen. That's not a green light to skip your workout—you need to do that, too. But if you're serious about **losing your love handles**, a smart eating plan is the foundation of the most effective gut-busting programs. In a Brazilian meta-analysis of 33 clinical trials, researchers determined that diet controls about 75 percent of weight loss. The upshot: If you aren't eating the right foods, you'll only be spinning your wheels in your quest for a six-pack.

Meet the powerfoods that will shrink your gut and keep you healthy for life

## The Power of Food

These 12 **power foods** make up a large part of your diet. The more of these foods you eat, the better your body will be able to increase lean muscle mass and avoid storing fat. They have been proven to do one or more of the following:

- Builds muscle
- Helps promote **weight loss**
- Strengthens bone
- Lowers blood pressure
- Fights cancer
- Improves immune function
- Fights **heart disease**

Though you can base entire meals and snacks around these foods, you don't have to. But do **follow these guidelines**.

- Incorporate two or three of these foods into each of your three major meals and at least one of them into each of your three snacks.
- Diversify your food at every meal to get a combination of protein, carbohydrates, and fat.
- Make sure you sneak a little bit of protein into each snack.

Here's an easy way to remember what's good for you. The first letter of each food group spells: **A.B.S.D.I.E.T.P.O.W.E.R 12**

### 1. Almonds and Other Nuts

Eat them with skins intact.

**Superpowers:** Building muscle, fighting food cravings

**Secret weapons:** Protein, monounsaturated fats, vitamin E, folate (in peanuts), fiber, magnesium, phosphorus

**Fight against:** Obesity, **heart disease**, muscle loss, cancer

**Sidekicks:** Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, avocados

**Impostors:** Salted or smoked nuts. High sodium spikes blood pressure.

These days, you hear about good fats and bad fats the way you hear about good cops and bad cops. One's on your side, and one's going to beat you silly. Oreos fall into the latter category, but nuts are clearly out to help you. They contain the monounsaturated fats that clear your arteries and help you feel full. All nuts are high in protein and monounsaturated fat.



But almonds are like Jack Nicholson in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. They're the king of the nuts. Eat as much as two handfuls a day. If you eat 2 ounces of **almonds** (about 24 of them), it can suppress your appetite--especially if you wash them down with 8 ounces of water.

For a quick popcorn alternative, spray a handful of almonds with nonstick cooking spray and bake them at 400 degrees F for 5 to 10 minutes. Take them out of the oven and sprinkle them with either a brown sugar and cinnamon mix or cayenne pepper and thyme.

## 2. Beans and Other Legumes

Including soybeans, chickpeas, pinto beans, navy beans, kidney beans, lima beans.

**Superpowers:** **Building muscle**, helping burn fat, regulating digestion

**Secret weapons:** Fiber, protein, iron, folate

**Fight against:** Obesity, colon cancer, **heart disease**, high blood pressure

**Sidekicks** Lentils, peas, bean dips, hummus, edamame

**Impostors:** Refried beans, which are high in saturated fats; baked beans, which are high in sugar.

Most of us can trace our resistance to **beans** to some unfortunately timed intestinal upheaval (third-grade math class, a first date gone awry). But beans are, as the famous rhyme says, good for your heart; the more you eat them, the more you'll be able to control your hunger.

Black, lima, pinto, navy -- you pick it. They're all low in fat, and they're packed with protein, fiber, and iron--nutrients crucial for **building muscle** and losing weight. Gastrointestinal disadvantages notwithstanding, they serve as one of the key members of the Abs Diet cabinet because of all their nutritional power. In fact, if you can replace a meat-heavy dish with a **bean**-heavy dish a couple of times a week, you'll be lopping a lot of **saturated fat** out of your diet and replacing it with higher amounts of fiber.



## 3. Spinach and Other Green Vegetables

**Superpowers:** Neutralizing free radicals (molecules that accelerate the aging process)

**Secret weapons:** **Vitamins** including A, C, and K; folate; beta-carotene; minerals including calcium and magnesium; fiber

**Fight against:** Cancer, **heart disease**, stroke, obesity, osteoporosis

**Sidekicks:** Cruciferous **vegetables** like broccoli and brussels sprouts; green, yellow, red, and orange vegetables such as asparagus, peppers, and yellow beans

**Impostors:** None, as long as you don't fry them or smother them in fatty cheese sauces. You know vegetables are packed with important nutrients, but they're also a critical part of your body-changing diet. I like spinach in particular because one serving supplies nearly a full day's vitamin A and half of your vitamin C. It's also loaded with folate -- a vitamin that protects against **heart disease**, stroke, and colon cancer. Dress a sandwich with the stuff, or stir-fry it with fresh garlic and olive oil.

Broccoli is high in fiber and more densely packed with **vitamins** and minerals than almost any other food. If you hate **vegetables**, hide them. Puree them and add them to marinara sauce or chili. The more you chop, the less you taste, and the easier it is for



your body to absorb nutrients. With broccoli, sauté it in garlic and olive oil, and douse it with hot sauce.

#### 4. Dairy Products

Fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese.

**Superpowers:** Building strong bones, firing up **weight loss**

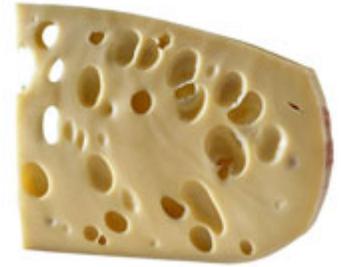
**Secret weapons:** Calcium, **vitamins** A and B12, riboflavin, phosphorus, potassium

**Fight against:** Osteoporosis, obesity, high blood pressure, cancer

**Sidekicks:** None

**Impostors:** Whole milk, frozen yogurt

**Dairy** is **nutrition's** version of a typecast actor. It gets so much good press for strengthening bones that it garners little attention for all the other stuff it does well. Just take a look at the mounting evidence that calcium is a prime belly-buster. A University of Tennessee study found that dieters who consumed between 1,200 and 1,300 milligrams of calcium a day lost nearly twice as much weight as those taking in less calcium. Researchers think the mineral probably prevents weight gain by increasing the breakdown of body fat and hampering its formation. Low-fat yogurt, cheeses, and other **dairy products** can play a key role in your diet. But I recommend milk as your major source of calcium. Liquids take up lots of room in your stomach, so your brain gets the signal that you're full. Sprinkling in chocolate whey powder can help curb sweet cravings.



#### 5. Instant Oatmeal

Unsweetened, unflavored.

**Superpowers:** Boosting energy and sex drive, reducing **cholesterol**, maintaining blood-sugar levels

**Secret weapons:** Complex carbohydrates and fiber

**Fights against:** **Heart disease**, diabetes, colon cancer, obesity

**Sidekicks:** High-fiber cereals like All-Bran and Fiber One

**Impostors:** Sugary cereals

**Oatmeal** is the Bo Derek of your pantry: It's a perfect 10. You can eat it at breakfast to propel you through sluggish mornings, a couple of hours before a workout to feel fully energized by the time you hit the weights, or at night to avoid a late-night binge. I recommend instant **oatmeal** for its convenience. But I want you to buy the unsweetened, unflavored variety and use other Powerfoods such as milk and berries to enhance the taste. Preflavored oatmeal often comes loaded with sugar calories.

Oatmeal contains soluble fiber, meaning that it attracts fluid and stays in your stomach longer than insoluble fiber (like vegetables). Soluble fiber is thought to reduce blood **cholesterol** by binding with digestive acids made from **cholesterol** and sending them out of your body. When this happens, your liver has to pull **cholesterol** from your blood to make more digestive acids, and your bad **cholesterol** levels drop.

**Trust me:** You need more fiber, both soluble and insoluble. Doctors recommend we get between 25 and 35 grams of fiber per day, but most of us get half that. Fiber is like a bouncer for your body, kicking out troublemakers and showing them the door. It protects you from **heart disease**. It protects you from colon cancer by sweeping carcinogens out of the intestines quickly.

A Penn State study also showed that oatmeal sustains your blood sugar levels longer than many other foods, which keeps your insulin levels stable and ensures you won't be



ravenous for the few hours that follow. That's good, because spikes in the production of insulin slow your metabolism and send a signal to the body that it's time to start storing fat. Since oatmeal breaks down slowly in the stomach, it causes less of a spike in insulin levels than foods like bagels. Include it in a smoothie or as your breakfast. (A U.S. Navy study showed that simply eating breakfast raised metabolism by 10 percent.)

**Another cool fact about oatmeal:** Preliminary studies indicate that oatmeal raises the levels of free testosterone in your body, enhancing your body's ability to **build muscle** and burn fat and boosting your sex drive.

## 6. Eggs

**Superpowers:** Building muscle, burning fat

**Secret weapons:** Protein, vitamins A and B12

**Fight against:** Obesity

**Sidekicks:** Egg Beaters, which have fewer calories than eggs and no fat, but just as much of the core nutrients

**Impostors:** None

For a long time, eggs were considered pure evil, and doctors were more likely to recommend tossing eggs at passing cars than throwing them into omelette pans. That's because just two eggs contain enough **cholesterol** to put you over your daily recommended value. Though you can cut out some of that by removing part of the yolk and using the white, more and more research shows that eating an egg or two a day will not raise your **cholesterol** levels.

In fact, we've learned that most blood **cholesterol** is made by the body from dietary fat, not dietary **cholesterol**. That's why you should take advantage of eggs and their powerful makeup of protein. The protein found in **eggs** has the highest "biological value" of protein -- a measure of how well it supports your body's protein need -- of any food. In other words, the protein in eggs is more effective at **building muscle** than protein from other sources, even milk and beef. Eggs also contain vitamin B12, which is necessary for fat breakdown.



## 7. Turkey and Other Lean Meats

Lean steak, chicken, fish.

**Superpowers:** Building muscle, improving the immune system

**Secret weapons:** Protein, iron, zinc, creatine (beef), omega-3 fatty acids (fish), vitamins B6 (chicken and fish) and B12, phosphorus, potassium

**Fight against:** Obesity, mood disorders, memory loss, heart disease

**Sidekicks:** Shellfish, Canadian bacon, omega-3 rich flaxseed

**Impostors:** Sausage, bacon, cured meats, ham, fatty cuts of steak like T-bone and rib eye

A classic muscle-building nutrient, protein is the base of any solid **diet plan**. **Turkey** breast is one of the leanest meats you'll find, and it packs nearly one-third of your daily requirements of niacin and vitamin B6. Dark meat, if you prefer, has lots of zinc and iron. One caution, though: If you're roasting a whole turkey for a family feast, avoid self-basting birds, which have been injected with fat.

Beef is another classic muscle-building protein. It's the top food source for creatine -- the substance your body uses when you lift weights. Beef does have a downside; it contains saturated fats, but some cuts have more than others. Look for rounds or loins (that's code for extra-lean); sirloins and New York strips are less fatty than prime ribs and T-bones.



To cut down on saturated fats even more, concentrate on fish like tuna and salmon, because they contain a healthy dose of omega-3 fatty acids as well as protein. Those fatty acids lower levels of a hormone called leptin in your body. Several recent studies suggest that leptin directly influences your metabolism: The higher your leptin levels, the more readily your body stores calories as fat. Researchers at the University of Wisconsin found that mice with low leptin levels have faster metabolisms and are able to burn fat faster than animals with higher leptin levels. Mayo Clinic researchers studying the diets of two African tribes found that the tribe that ate fish frequently had leptin levels nearly five times lower than the tribe that primarily ate vegetables.

**A bonus benefit:** Researchers in Stockholm found that men who ate no **fish** had three times the risk of prostate cancer of those who ate it regularly. It's the omega-3s that inhibit prostate-cancer growth.

## 8. Peanut Butter

All-natural, sugar-free.

**Superpowers:** Boosting testosterone, **building muscle**, burning fat

**Secret weapons:** Protein, monounsaturated fat, vitamin E, niacin, magnesium

**Fights against:** Obesity, muscle loss, wrinkles, cardiovascular **disease**

**Sidekicks:** Cashew and almond butters

**Impostors:** Mass-produced sugary and trans fatty **peanut butters**

Yes, PB has its disadvantages: It's high in calories, and it doesn't go over well when you order it in four-star restaurants. But it's packed with those heart-healthy monounsaturated fats that can increase your body's production of testosterone, which can help your muscles grow and your fat melt. In one 18-month experiment, people who integrated peanut butter into their diet maintained **weight loss** better than those on low-fat plans. A recent study from the University of Illinois showed that diners who had monounsaturated fats before a meal (in this case, it was olive oil) ate 25 percent fewer calories during that meal than those who didn't.

Practically speaking, PB also works because it's a quick and versatile snack -- and it tastes good. Since a diet that includes an indulgence like **peanut butter** doesn't leave you feeling deprived, it's easier to follow and won't make you fall prey to other cravings. Use it on an apple, on the go, or to add flavor to potentially bland smoothies. Two caveats: You can't gorge on it because of its fat content; limit yourself to about 3 tablespoons per day. And you should look for all-natural peanut butter, not the mass-produced brands that have added sugar.



## 9. Olive Oil

**Superpowers:** Lowering **cholesterol**, boosting the immune system

**Secret weapons:** Monounsaturated fat, vitamin E

**Fights against:** Obesity, cancer, **heart disease**, high blood pressure

**Sidekicks:** Canola oil, peanut oil, sesame oil

**Impostors:** Other vegetable and hydrogenated vegetable oils, trans fatty acids, margarine

No need for a long explanation here: **Olive oil** and its brethren will help control your food cravings; they'll also help you burn fat and keep your **cholesterol** in check. Do you need any more reason to pass the bottle?



## 10. Whole-Grain Breads and Cereals

**Superpowers:** Preventing your body from storing fat

**Secret weapons:** Fiber, protein, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin E, calcium, magnesium, potassium, zinc

**Fight against:** Obesity, cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease

**Sidekicks:** Brown rice, whole-wheat pretzels, whole-wheat pastas

**Impostors:** Processed bakery products like white bread, bagels, and doughnuts; breads labeled wheat instead of whole wheat



There's only so long a person can survive on an all-protein diet or an all-salad diet or an all-anything diet. You crave carbohydrates because your body needs them. The key is to eat the ones that have been the least processed -- carbs that still have all their heart-healthy, belly-busting fiber intact.

**Grains** like wheat, corn, oats, barley, and rye are seeds that come from grasses, and they're broken into three parts -- the germ, the bran, and the endosperm. Think of a kernel of corn.

The biggest part of the kernel -- the part that blows up when you make popcorn -- is the endosperm. Nutritionally it's pretty much a big dud. It contains starch, a little protein, and some B **vitamins**. The germ is the smallest part of the grain; in the corn kernel, it's that little white seedlike thing. But while it's small, it packs the most nutritional power. It contains protein, oils, and the B **vitamins** thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, and pyridoxine. It also has vitamin E and the minerals magnesium, zinc, potassium, and iron. The bran is the third part of the grain and the part where all the fiber is stored. It's a coating around the endosperm that contains B **vitamins**, zinc, calcium, potassium, magnesium, and other minerals.

So what's the point of this little biology lesson? Well, get this: When food manufacturers process and refine grains, guess which two parts get tossed out? Yup, the bran, where all the fiber and minerals are, and the germ, where all the protein and **vitamins** are. And what they keep -- the nutritionally bankrupt endosperm (that is, starch) -- gets made into pasta, bagels, white bread, white rice, and just about every other wheat product and baked good you'll find. Crazy, right? But if you eat products made with all the parts of the grain -- whole-grain bread, pasta, long-grain rice -- you get all the **nutrition** that food manufacturers are otherwise trying to cheat you out of.

Whole-grain carbohydrates can play an important role in a healthy lifestyle. In an 11-year study of 16,000 middle-age people, researchers at the University of Minnesota found that consuming three daily servings of whole grains can reduce a person's mortality risk over the course of a decade by 23 percent. (Tell that to your buddy who's eating low-carb.) Whole-grain bread keeps insulin levels low, which keeps you from storing fat. In this diet, it's especially versatile because it'll supplement any kind of meal with little prep time. Toast for breakfast, sandwiches for lunch, with a dab of peanut butter for a snack. Don't believe the hype. Carbs -- the right kind of carbs -- are good for you.

Warning: Food manufacturers are very sneaky. Sometimes, after refining away all the **vitamins**, fiber, and minerals from wheat, they'll add molasses to the bread, turning it brown, and put it on the grocery shelf with a label that says wheat bread. It's a trick! Truly nutritious breads and other products will say whole-wheat or whole-grain. Don't be fooled.

## 11. Extra-Protein (Whey) Powder

**Superpowers:** Building muscle, burning fat

**Secret weapons:** Protein, cysteine, glutathione

**Fights against:** Obesity

**Sidekick:** Ricotta cheese

**Impostor:** Mistaken Soy protein for Whey

Protein powder? What the heck is that? It's the only Abs Diet Powerfood that you may not be able to find at the supermarket, but it's the one that's worth the trip to a health food store. I'm talking about powdered **whey protein**, a type of animal protein that packs a muscle-building wallop. If you add whey powder to your meal -- in a smoothie, for instance -- you may very well have created the most powerful fat-burning meal possible. Whey protein is a high-quality protein that contains essential amino acids that **build muscle** and burn fat. But it's especially effective because it has the highest amount of protein for the fewest number of calories, making it fat's kryptonite.

Smoothies with some whey powder can be most effective before a workout. A 2001 study at the University of Texas found that lifters who drank a shake containing amino acids and carbohydrates before working out increased their protein synthesis (their ability to **build muscle**) more than lifters who drank the same shake after exercising. Since exercise increases bloodflow to tissues, the theory goes that having whey protein in your system when you **work out** may lead to a greater uptake of amino acids -- the building blocks of muscle -- in your muscle.

But that's not all. **Whey protein** can help protect your body from prostate cancer. Whey is a good source of cysteine, which your body uses to build a prostate cancer-fighting antioxidant called glutathione. Adding just a small amount may increase glutathione levels in your body by up to 60 percent.

By the way, the one great source of whey protein in your supermarket is ricotta cheese. Unlike other cheeses, which are made from milk curd, ricotta is made from whey -- a good reason to visit your local Italian eatery.



## 12. Raspberries and Other Berries

**Superpowers:** Protecting your heart, enhancing eyesight, improving memory, preventing cravings

**Secret weapons:** Antioxidants, fiber, vitamin C, tannins (cranberries)

**Fight against:** Heart disease, cancer, obesity

**Sidekicks:** Most other fruits, especially apples and grapefruit

**Impostors:** Sugary jellies

Depending on your taste, any berry will do (except Crunch Berries). I like raspberries as much for their power as for their taste. They carry powerful levels of antioxidants, all-purpose compounds that help your body fight **heart disease** and cancer; the berries' flavonoids may also help your eyesight, balance, coordination, and short-term memory. One cup of raspberries packs 6 grams of fiber and more than half of your daily requirement of vitamin C.

**Blueberries** are also loaded with the soluble fiber that, like oatmeal, keeps you fuller longer. In fact, they're one of the most healthful foods you can eat. Blueberries beat out 39 other fruits and vegetables in the antioxidant power ratings. (One study also found that rats that ate blueberries were more coordinated and smarter than rats that didn't.)



Strawberries contain another valuable form of fiber called pectin (as do grapefruits, peaches, apples, and oranges). In a study from the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, subjects drank plain orange juice or juice spiked with pectin. The people who got the loaded juice felt fuller after drinking it than those who got the juice without the pectin. The difference lasted for an impressive 4 hours.

## 5 Ways to Burn 100 Calories

When you change your thinking from, "I can't work out" to, "I will burn 100 calories just like that," stopping holiday weight gain is simple with these tips from Fitness magazine.

For time-crunched days, try these mini-workouts. Each burns 100 calories and most take less than 15 minutes. If you do four exercise hits a day, you can whittle away more than 3 pounds of fat a month.

Note: All calorie counts are for a 130-pound woman.

### Running upstairs

Time to burn 100 calories: 7 minutes

Scamper up the stairs of the house, turn your stairwell at work into a gym, or find a steep hill to tackle on your regular running route. Count only the time that you spend going up. For knee safety, always walk downstairs instead of running.

### Jumping rope

Time to burn 100 calories: 10 minutes

Try jumping twice per second. If you count out "one thousand one," that should equal two jumps. If you're more adept at fancy footwork, mix it up: Hop on one foot instead of two, twist from side to side or travel around the room as you jump.

### Running

Time to burn 100 calories: however long it takes to run one mile

If you run a 10-minute mile, you'll incinerate about 100 calories in 10 minutes; running a 9-minute mile brings it down to 9 minutes, and so on. The easiest way to inject more speed into your stride: Pump your arms as you run.

### Calisthenics

Time to burn 100 calories: 15 minutes

You'll remember these from your high-school gym-class days: Push-ups, sit-ups, jumping jacks and squat thrusts are not only standards, they're great strengtheners and calorie burners, too. Do a combination for one great workout, or incorporate them into a circuit program.

### Race walking

Time to burn 100 calories: about 15 minutes for a 12- to 15-minute mile

Walking sometimes gets a bad calorie-burning rap, but that's because most people don't walk quickly enough to see good results. Leisurely strolls don't cut it. Speed it up for a great calorie blast: Pump your arms back and forth and focus on pushing off with the toes of your rear foot to pick up the pace.

Source: *Fitness Magazine*

